



Media Contacts:

Daniel Moise, dmoise@virtua.org, 609-410-2703

Julie Walsh, jwalsh@virtua.org, 609-828-8981

Kathy McLaughlin, kmclaughlin@virtua.org, 609-636-1190

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *[Download photos](#) of Virtua's women in leadership*****

March is Women's History Month

Virtua Health Defies Industry Norms with a Majority of Women in Leadership Roles

*Nearly 55% of the N.J. health system's senior leaders are women, compared to 25% industry-wide;
Virtua also bucks trend of the "Great Breakup"*

(MARLTON, N.J., March 17, 2023) Women represent about 75% of the U.S. health care workforce, yet they're vastly under-represented at the leadership level. In fact, only 25% of senior-leader health-care roles worldwide are occupied by women, according to Forbes. Making matters worse, women in leadership are abandoning their careers in record numbers, according to Bloomberg and USA Today. Sheryl Sandberg, founder of LeanIn.Org, dubbed this the "Great Breakup."

[Virtua Health](#), South Jersey's largest health system, is defying this distressing lack of parity. Five of the nine people on Virtua's senior executive team are women, two of them hired and two of them promoted under the current CEO's tenure. What's more, nearly 55% of Virtua's senior leadership team members are women—more than twice the industry average—many of them advanced in recent years as part of a purposeful identification and acknowledgment of talent.

This is no accident. Rather, it reflects the Marlton-based health system's deliberate effort to recruit, retain, and advance women in its workforce as a strategic imperative. The practice also makes good business sense: having a significant proportion of women in top positions tends to improve organizations' performance, research shows.

"Recognizing talent and being intentional about how we hire, promote, and ensure fair and equitable opportunities for all, especially women, has been an important tenet of my leadership," said President and CEO Dennis W. Pullin, FACHE. "Today, women are at the helm of many of our divisions, ensuring Virtua is an industry leader in innovation, clinical excellence, and human experience."

Among the women in leadership roles is [Rhonda Jordan](#), executive vice president and chief human resources officer of the not-for-profit organization. Jordan has worked at Virtua for more than 25 years, and is driving action to ensure women (and other under-represented groups) have pathways to advance their careers in a nurturing environment. Examples include:

- **Women of Virtua** – the first of several colleague communities (affinity groups) that have become essential to Virtua's culture. The group provides networking opportunities, mentoring circles, and safe spaces for women to connect with and support one another.

- **Board Diversity** – Virtua has instituted bylaws to ensure its board of trustees reflects the diversity of its service area, including more representation for women.
- **Leadership Development** – Virtua’s human resources team tracks the development and advancement of its workforce, and has enacted measures to ensure that people of color, women, and other individuals with historically overlooked identities/backgrounds receive equitable opportunities to grow in their careers and be recognized for their contributions.
- **Inclusion, Diversity and Equity for All (IDEA) Committee** – This group encompasses colleagues from every division of Virtua, working collaboratively to advance three main goals: elevating the value of inclusion and diversity, cultivating an inclusive culture, and creating an equitable workforce.

Such dedicated efforts are critical at a time when 43% of women leaders said they were burned out, compared with 31% of men at the same level.

Women leaders are good for business, research shows. For example, a 2020 report from McKinsey & Company found that companies in which women made up at least 30% of the executive team were 48% more likely to outperform companies with fewer or no women in leadership.

Studies have consistently found women tend to adopt a more transformational leadership style, which includes demonstrating compassion, care, concern, respect, and equality. (By contrast, men have a more transactional approach, which includes a more task-focused, achievement-oriented style of management.)

“In my career, I have benefitted from working for and with exceptional women who helped me appreciate my own potential,” said [Stephanie Fendrick](#), executive vice president and chief strategy officer for Virtua. “Now that I am in a leadership role, I consider it both an honor and a responsibility to pay it forward and help talented women thrive professionally.”

“I have witnessed such tremendous progress at Virtua through the years, and we are a better organization because of it,” said Jordan. “We have about 10,000 women on our workforce, and collectively we are helping South Jersey be well, get well, and stay well.”

Women in Leadership at Virtua Health

Executive leadership team

[Sarah Fawcett-Lee, FAHP, CRFE](#), senior VP and chief philanthropy officer

[Stephanie Fendrick, FACHE, MBA](#), executive VP and chief strategy officer

[Rhonda Jordan, SHRM-SCP](#), executive VP and chief human resources officer

[Lauren Rowinski, JD](#), senior VP and chief legal officer

[Chrisie Scott, MBA](#), senior VP and chief marketing officer

Senior vice presidents

Donna Antenucci, RN, BSN, senior VP, clinical integrated network (CIN) operations

Lisa Ferraro, BSN, NEA-BC, MBA, senior VP and chief quality, safety, and risk officer

Clare Hall, MBA, senior VP of human resources operations

Catherine Hughes, MSN, MHA, RN, NEA-BC, senior VP and chief nursing officer

Beth Juliano, MHA, RHIA, senior VP, clinical information and identity services

Jennifer Khelil, DO, MBA, senior VP and chief medical officer

Rebecca D. Lynch, RN, MHA, senior VP and president, Virtua Medical Group

Debra Moran, senior VP and health equity and community-based programs

Rita S. Veterano, RN, BSN, MSHA, senior VP, integrated care management and home health

Mary Annis Wajda, MBA, CPA, senior VP, integrated solutions

Sources

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#): “In 2021, 16.4 million women were employed in the health care and social assistance industry. This was 77.6 percent of the total 21.2 million workers in the industry.”

[Forbes](#): “According to the World Health Organization, women account for 70% of the global healthcare sector. Yet, at the executive level, women make up just 25% of healthcare leadership positions.”

[Bloomberg](#): “Women were leaving their jobs in droves. By the end of 2020, their share of the labor force had fallen to its lowest levels since 1987...The October LeanIn.Org report said that for every woman at the senior manager level who gets promoted, two leave.”

[World Economic Forum](#): “The report notes that 43% of female leaders are burned out, compared to 31% of men at the same level.”

[USA Today](#): “Women don’t get the leadership positions or the top pay even in industries they dominate.”

[USA Today](#): “A 2020 report from McKinsey found companies in which women made up at least 30% of the executive team were 48% more likely to outperform the national industry median compared with teams with fewer or no women.”

[PR Newswire](#): “We are in the Midst of a ‘Great Breakup’: Women Leaders Are Demanding More and Leaving Their Companies in Unprecedented Numbers to Get It.”

[Harvard Business Review](#): “The women’s success shows that a nontraditional leadership style is well suited to the conditions of some work environments and can increase an organization’s chances of surviving in an uncertain world...The men are more likely than the women to describe themselves in ways that characterize what some management experts call “transaction” leadership...The women respondents, on the other hand, described themselves in ways that characterize “transformational” leadership.”

About Virtua Health:

Virtua Health is an academic health system committed to helping the people of South Jersey be well, get well, and stay well by providing the complete spectrum of advanced, accessible, and trusted health care services. Virtua's 14,000 colleagues provide tertiary care, including renowned cardiology and transplant programs, complemented by a community-based care portfolio. In addition to five hospitals, two satellite emergency departments, 34 ambulatory surgery centers, and more than 350 other locations, Virtua brings health services directly into communities through Hospital at Home, physical therapy and rehabilitation, mobile screenings, and its paramedic program. Virtua has 2,850 affiliated doctors and other clinicians, and its specialties include orthopedics, advanced surgery, and maternity. Virtua is academically affiliated with Rowan University, leading research, innovation, and immersive education at the Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences of Rowan University. Virtua is also affiliated with Penn Medicine for cancer and neuroscience, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for pediatrics. As a not-for-profit, Virtua is committed to the well-being of the community and provides innovative outreach programs that address social challenges affecting health, most notably the "Eat Well" food access initiative, which includes the unparalleled Eat Well Mobile Grocery Store. A Magnet-recognized health system ranked by U.S. News and World Report, Virtua has received many [awards](#) for quality, safety, and its outstanding work environment. For more information, visit Virtua.org. To help Virtua make a difference, visit GiveToVirtua.org.

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